

European Update 22nd February 2018, from Network for Europe Cheshire, Cumbria, G Manchester, Lancashire, Liverpool CR

Headlines

ERDF and ESF calls due in March
Mid Term revisions
Extensions - YEI, CoFinance
Consultation

Calls

ESF and ERDF programmes will run their full course (ie for the next five years - to 2023), so with somewhat less than half of the funds committed, we approach the second half of the Programmes.

Almost no calls remain - just nine. Of these, four are for Rural Development (EAFRD), four are ERDF-SUD (Sustainable Urban Development), and there is one low carbon ERDF call. There are no live ESF calls, and the only calls for the North West are for Rural support.

The coming local elections might mean no announcements in late March. It is currently expected that there will be a large ERDF call early in March 2018, and then again in October 2018 and again in March 2019. The next call might perhaps be on 2nd March, and might have a short deadline (possibly 20th April). Wait for announcements (which will be on gov.uk). Officials have been working up the calls, and will include some for the North West.

ESF calls are not tied to fixed dates like ERDF, but are expected to begin arriving soon, and again these will include the North West.

Projects generally last around three years. With the delayed start to the current Programme, quite a few projects are due to finish in 2018. Appraisals have been taking up to a year. Consequently, some of the March calls will be for similar activity to what has been funded before (and could be awarded to an organisation already running a project, or to other organisations).

There is still a problem with the size of projects. While only agreeing large projects is less work for the Managing Authority, it does tend to reduce involvement of the third sector, and increases the need for coalitions or sub-contracting, which increases bureaucracy and reduces simplification. While previously ERDF often had a minimum project size (around £1m), ESF is beginning to include minimum sizes (although this has varied between 50k and 500k from Europe).

YEI-ESF Youth Employment Initiative

This is only available in Merseyside in the North West, and covers NEET young people under 30. A further Action Note (0011/18) was issued on 16th February, sent direct to organisations running YEI projects. For Liverpool, there was a £7.7m call in February 2017, but this was unsuccessful, with only £1.8m approved. Thus there is around £6m (YEI+ESF) still available, which could be used by existing organisations. The Liverpool City Region ESIF committee has not met since October, so there has not been an opportunity for Partners to discuss future calls, but across England there is considerable unspent YEI-ESF, so more could be available, perhaps through a further call. Currently, there is still around £100m undercommitted- this is available for London (which hasn't used any), Liverpool and parts of the North East and parts of Birmingham (plus five smaller areas). If it is not spent, the YEI part will be returned to Brussels.

Urban Poverty Partnership

The Final Action Plan is now available, including twelve proposed actions.
<https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/urban-poverty>

Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub

Launch events are being held in March (Chorley 7th, Lancaster & Morecambe 12th, Burnley 14th, Blackpool 16th, Preston 21st, W Lancs 22nd, Blackburn 29th). Email Sara for an invite sara.gaskell@lancashirelep.co.uk

ESF Co-Finance Organisations

ESFA is currently finalising agreements with projects for extensions to March 2019. There will also be more Co-Finance funding through HMPPS and DWP. There has not yet been an official announcement from the Big Lottery Fund.

The only local Co-Finance organisation outside London is Greater Manchester Combined Authority. The new call (for £52m) has resulted in a contract for InWork GM, described as a new alliance partnership between Igneus and Manchester Growth Company, with Pathways CIC and Pluss. The launch was on 24th January - match is from Working Well.

Mid Term Reviews

Revisions to the English ERDF Operational Programme has been agreed by the European Commission - the changes are not particularly large.

The first batch of revisions to the English ESF Operational Programme were submitted at the end of 2017. The rest will be submitted by the end of February, and should be approved by the end of March. These are more far reaching, including changes to sub-priorities within P1, and more flexibility within P2.

The revisions to the European Regulations (primarily around simplification) are expected to be published by April.

Gold Plating

A recent national sub-committee raised the issue of gold plating (adding unnecessary work, for example in proving eligibility of finance or participants), and what could be done under the Simplification Agenda. First steps are likely to be collecting examples, and suggestions for improvements.

EClaims

Now that EClaims and Jaspersoft appear to be working, there is a determination to get the online system properly up and running. This will lead to accurate and timely information on the system, and in Management Information. It affects claims and bids.

Currently the Managing Authority for ESF appears so committed to getting this right that most other activities are deferred. There are still teething troubles with inputting data to EClaims, but once everything is on the system and has been checked it will be a big step forward. In the meantime, payments have been pushed back a few weeks.

Have your say

The European Commission has launched a public consultation on ESF and ERDF, open to all citizens and stakeholders interested in Cohesion Policy, including of course third sector organisations. Deadline is 8th March.

<https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/2eec41ff-e859-c4c9-1b47-86c508612517>

Network for Europe

info@networkforeurope.eu



European Union

European Structural
and Investment Funds